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SAVING LATIN BY THE TEACHING OF LATIN

[A special program prepared by Miss Frances E. Sabin, of the University of Wisconsin, and presented at the thirteenth annual meeting of the Association.]

A symposium on this topic formed one of the programs for the meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South, held at Louisville, Kentucky, on April 5-7, 1917. The justification for such a discussion is based upon the assumption that Latin must stand or fall by the results of the classroom, and that the solution of the Latin question, therefore, is in the hands of the Latin teacher. If this be granted, it is surely worth while to give serious consideration to so vital a point in the Latin defense. The fact that Latin is one of the best-taught subjects in the curriculum (according to the opinions of school inspectors) does not lessen the importance of this discussion; for the truth is, as everyone who knows the facts will admit, that Latin must be taught, not only as well as, but a great deal better than, any other subject in order to hold its own today. As long as high-school pupils and college students go out hating the subject and frankly doubting its value in their education, as many do still, there will continue to be the necessity for looking into the subject of the teaching of Latin.

As a basis for the discussion two points were taken for granted: first, that the high-school teacher, the college instructor, and the university professor could meet on common ground, realizing, as they all must do, that failures on the side of teaching are not peculiar to any one grade of instruction; and secondly, that no difference of opinion could possibly exist in the Association as to the importance of a knowledge of the subject-matter. To talk of teaching Latin when one does not know his subject is, of course, ridiculous; and to talk of saving Latin by such teaching is even more absurd.

In attempting to bring out significant points in connection with the topic, emphasis was laid on the following theses:

1. It is not such extraneous activities as Roman banquets, plays, etc., that really count in the long run in arousing an interest in Latin, but skilful teaching in the classroom.

2. There is a certain way of "getting one's subject across," an art in teaching, which is worth the serious attention of high-school, college, and university instructors alike, and is not to be lightly dismissed as a subject fit only for discussion in classes in education, or to be misunderstood as the worship of the overworked "method" or "device." There have always been, and will always be, certain great principles of teaching. It is well to recognize these occasionally, especially in a body where young as well as experienced teachers come for inspiration, even though the last word on this important subject may long ago have been said.

3. There is nothing more important than the training of the teacher into whose hands is put the task of keeping Latin in the schools of today.

The first point was covered by Miss Jessie E. Allen, of the Girls' High School, Philadelphia. The second topic was discussed by Miss Leta Wilson, of the high school at Madison, Wisconsin; Professor D'Ooge, of the State Normal College at Ypsilanti, Michigan; and Professor Bonner, of the University of Chicago. The third topic was discussed by Miss Lucia Spooner, of the State Normal School, Superior, Wisconsin, an experienced teacher who could speak with authority upon the needs of the prospective teacher in the university, and by Miss Lotta Liebmann, of Morris, Illinois, who, by reason of the fact that she had not been long in the world of teaching, was able to make an account of her experiences exceedingly worth while to those who are interested in planning courses for the training of teachers.

[Selected papers from this program are published in the following pages.]